Remarks at Georgetown University

June 25, 2013

Thank you, Georgetown. Everybody, please be seated. And my first announcement today is that you should all take off your jackets. [*Laughter*] I'm going to do the same. We've got—[*applause*]. It's not that sexy, now. [*Laughter*]

It is good to be back on campus, and it is a great privilege to speak from the steps of this historic hall that welcomed Presidents going back to George Washington.

I want to thank your president, President DeGioia, who's here today. I want to thank him for hosting us. I want to thank the many members of my Cabinet and my administration. I want to thank Leader Pelosi and the Members of Congress who are here. We are very grateful for their support.

And I want to say thank you to the Hoyas in the house for having me back. It was important for me to speak directly to your generation, because the decisions that we make now and in the years ahead will have a profound impact on the world that all of you inherit.

On Christmas Eve, 1968, the astronauts of Apollo 8 did a live broadcast from lunar orbit. So Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, William Anders—the first humans to orbit the Moon—described what they saw, and they read Scripture from the Book of Genesis to the rest of us back here. And later that night, they took a photo that would change the way we see and think about our world.

It was an image of Earth: beautiful, breathtaking, a glowing marble of blue oceans and green forests and brown mountains brushed with white clouds, rising over the surface of the Moon.

And while the sight of our planet from space might seem routine today, imagine what it looked like to those of us seeing our home, our planet, for the first time. Imagine what it looked like to children like me. Even the astronauts were amazed. "It makes you realize," Lovell would say, "just what you have back there on Earth."

And around the same time we began exploring space, scientists were studying changes taking place in the Earth's atmosphere. Now, scientists had known since the 1800s that greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide trap heat and that burning fossil fuels release those gases into the air. That wasn't news. But in the late 1950s, the National Weather Service began measuring the levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, with the worry that rising levels might someday disrupt the fragile balance that makes our planet so hospitable. And what they've found, year after year, is that the levels of carbon pollution in our atmosphere have increased dramatically.

That science, accumulated and reviewed over decades, tells us that our planet is changing in ways that will have profound impacts on all of humankind.

The 12 warmest years in recorded history have all come in the last 15 years. Last year, temperatures in some areas of the ocean reached record highs, and ice in the Arctic shrank to its smallest size on record, faster than most models had predicted it would. These are facts.

Now, we know that no single weather event is caused solely by climate change. Droughts and fires and floods, they go back to ancient times. But we also know that in a world that's warmer than it used to be, all weather events are affected by a warming planet. The fact that sea levels in New York—in New York Harbor—are now a foot higher than a century ago, that didn't cause Hurricane Sandy, but it certainly contributed to the destruction that left large parts of our mightiest city dark and underwater.

The potential impacts go beyond rising sea levels. Here at home, 2012 was the warmest year in our history. Midwest farms were parched by the worst drought since the Dust Bowl, and then drenched by the wettest spring on record. Western wildfires scorched an area larger than the State of Maryland. Just last week, a heat wave in Alaska shot temperatures into the 90s.

And we know that the costs of these events can be measured in lost lives and lost livelihoods, lost homes, lost businesses, hundreds of billions of dollars in emergency services and disaster relief. In fact, those who are already feeling the effects of climate change don't have time to deny it; they're busy dealing with it. Firefighters are braving longer wildfire seasons, and States and Federal governments have to figure out how to budget for that. Now, I had to sit on a meeting with the Department of Interior and Agriculture and some of the rest of my team just to figure out how we're going to pay for more and more expensive fire seasons.

Farmers see crops wilted one year, washed away the next, and higher food prices get passed on to you, the American consumer. Mountain communities worry about what smaller snowpacks will mean for tourism, and then families at the bottom of the mountains wonder what it will mean for their drinking water. Americans across the country are already paying the price of inaction in insurance premiums, State and local taxes, and the costs of rebuilding and disaster relief.

So the question is not whether we need to act. The overwhelming judgment of science—of chemistry and physics and millions of measurements—has put all that to rest. Ninety-seven percent of scientists—including, by the way, some who originally disputed the data—have now put that to rest. They've acknowledged the planet is warming and human activity is contributing to it.

So the question now is whether we will have the courage to act before it's too late. And how we answer will have a profound impact on the world that we leave behind not just to you, but to your children and to your grandchildren. As a President, as a father, and as an American, I'm here to say we need to act.

I refuse to condemn your generation and future generations to a planet that's beyond fixing. And that's why today I'm announcing a new national climate action plan, and I'm here to enlist your generation's help in keeping the United States of America a leader—a global leader—in the fight against climate change.

Now, this plan builds on progress that we've already made. Last year, I took office—the year that I took office, my administration pledged to reduce America's greenhouse gas emissions by about 17 percent from their 2005 levels by the end of this decade. And we rolled up our sleeves, and we got to work. We doubled the electricity we generate from wind and the sun. We doubled the mileage our cars will get on a gallon of gas by the middle of the next decade.

Here at Georgetown, I unveiled my strategy for a secure energy future. And thanks to the ingenuity of our businesses, we're starting to produce much more of our own energy. We're

building the first nuclear power plants in more than three decades in Georgia and South Carolina. For the first time in 18 years, America is poised to produce more of our own oil than we buy from other nations. And today, we produce more natural gas than anybody else. So we're producing energy. And these advances have grown our economy, they've created new jobs, they can't be shipped overseas, and by the way, they've also helped to drive our carbon pollution to its lowest levels in nearly 20 years. Since 2006, no country on Earth has reduced its total carbon pollution by as much as the United States of America.

So it's a good start. But the reason we're all here in the heat today is because we know we've got more to do. In my State of the Union Address, I urged Congress to come up with a bipartisan, market-based solution to climate change, like the one that Republican and Democratic Senators worked on together a few years ago. And I still want to see that happen. I'm willing to work with anyone to make that happen.

But this is a challenge that does not pause for partisan gridlock. It demands our attention now. And this is my plan to meet it: a plan to cut carbon pollution, a plan to protect our country from the impacts of climate change, and a plan to lead the world in a coordinated assault on a changing climate.

This plan begins with cutting carbon pollution by changing the way we use energy: using less dirty energy, using more clean energy, wasting less energy throughout our economy.

Now, 43 years ago, Congress passed a law called the Clean Air Act of 1970. It was a good law. The reasoning behind it was simple: New technology can protect our health by protecting the air we breathe from harmful pollution. And that law passed the Senate unanimously. Think about that: It passed the Senate unanimously. It passed the House of Representatives 375 to 1. I don't know who the one guy was—I haven't looked that up. [*Laughter*] I mean, you can barely get that many votes to name a post office these days. [*Laughter*]

It was signed into law by a Republican President. It was later strengthened by another Republican President. This used to be a bipartisan issue.

Six years ago, the Supreme Court ruled that greenhouse gases are pollutants covered by that same Clean Air Act. And they required the Environmental Protection Agency, the EPA, to determine whether they're a threat to our health and welfare. And in 2009, the EPA determined that they are a threat to both our health and our welfare in many different ways—from dirtier air to more common heat waves—and therefore subject to regulation.

Now, today, about 40 percent of America's carbon pollution comes from our power plants. But here's the thing: Right now there are no Federal limits to the amount of carbon pollution that those plants can pump into our air. None. Zero. We limit the amount of toxic chemicals like mercury and sulfur and arsenic in our air or our water, but power plants can still dump unlimited amounts of carbon pollution into the air for free. That's not right, that's not safe, and it needs to stop.

So today, for the sake of our children and the health and safety of all Americans, I'm directing the Environmental Protection Agency to put an end to the limitless dumping of carbon pollution from our power plants and complete new pollution standards for both new and existing power plants.

I'm also directing the EPA to develop these standards in an open and transparent way, to provide flexibility to different States with different needs, and build on the leadership that many States and cities and companies have already shown. In fact, many power companies

have already begun modernizing their plants and creating new jobs in the process. Others have shifted to burning cleaner natural gas instead of dirtier fuel sources.

Nearly a dozen States have already implemented or are implementing their own market-based programs to reduce carbon pollution. More than 25 have set energy efficiency targets. More than 35 have set renewable energy targets. Over 1,000 mayors have signed agreements to cut carbon pollution. So the idea of setting higher pollution standards for our power plants is not new. It's just time for Washington to catch up with the rest of the country. And that's what we intend to do.

Now, what you'll hear from the special interests and their allies in Congress is that this will kill jobs and crush the economy and basically end American free enterprise as we know it. And the reason I know you'll hear those things is because that's what they said every time America sets clear rules and better standards for our air and our water and our children's health. And every time, they've been wrong.

For example, in 1970, when we decided through the Clean Air Act to do something about the smog that was choking our cities—and by the way, most young people here aren't old enough to remember what it was like, but when I was going to school in 1979, 1980 in Los Angeles, there were days where folks couldn't go outside. And the sunsets were spectacular because of all the pollution in the air.

But at the time when we passed the Clean Air Act to try to get rid of some of this smog, some of the same doomsayers were saying new pollution standards will decimate the auto industry. Guess what? It didn't happen. Our air got cleaner.

In 1990, when we decided to do something about acid rain, they said our electricity bills would go up, the lights would go off, businesses around the country would suffer, I quote, "a quiet death." None of it happened, except we cut acid rain dramatically.

See, the problem with all these tired excuses for inaction is that it suggests a fundamental lack of faith in American business and American ingenuity. These critics seem to think that when we ask our businesses to innovate and reduce pollution and lead, they can't or they won't do it. They'll just kind of give up and quit. But in America, we know that's not true. Look at our history.

When we restricted cancer-causing chemicals in plastics and leaded fuel in our cars, it didn't end the plastics industry or the oil industry. American chemists came up with better substitutes. When we phased out CFCs—the gases that were depleting the ozone layer—it didn't kill off refrigerators or air conditioners or deodorant. [*Laughter*] American workers and businesses figured out how to do it better without harming the environment as much. The fuel standards that we put in place just a few years ago didn't cripple automakers. The American auto industry retooled, and today, our automakers are selling the best cars in the world at a faster rate than they have in 5 years, with more hybrid, more plug-in, more fuel-efficient cars for everybody to choose from.

So the point is, if you look at our history, don't bet against American industry. Don't bet against American workers. Don't tell folks that we have to choose between the health of our children or the health of our economy.

The old rules may say we can't protect our environment and promote economic growth at the same time, but in America, we've always used new technologies—we've used science, we've used research and development and discovery—to make the old rules obsolete.

Today, we use more clean energy—more renewables and natural gas—which is supporting hundreds of thousands of good jobs. We waste less energy, which saves you money at the pump and in your pocketbooks. And guess what? Our economy is 60 percent bigger than it was 20 years ago, while our carbon emissions are roughly back to where they were 20 years ago.

So obviously, we can figure this out. It's not an either-or, it's a both-and. We've got to look after our children, we have to look after our future, and we have to grow the economy and create jobs. We can do all of that as long as we don't fear the future, instead, we seize it.

And by the way, don't take my word for it. Recently, more than 500 businesses, including giants like GM and Nike, issued a climate declaration, calling action on climate change "one of the great opportunities of the 21st century." Walmart is working to cut its carbon pollution by 20 percent and transition completely to renewable energy. [*Applause*] Yes. Walmart deserves a cheer for that. But think about it: Would the biggest company, the biggest retailer in America, would they really do that if it weren't good for business? If it weren't good for their shareholders?

A low-carbon, clean energy economy can be an engine of growth for decades to come. And I want America to build that engine. I want America to build that future right here in the United States of America. That's our task.

Now, one thing I want to make sure everybody understands: This does not mean that we're going to suddenly stop producing fossil fuels. Our economy wouldn't run very well if it did. And transitioning to a clean energy economy takes time. But when the doomsayers trot out the old warnings that these ambitions will somehow hurt our energy supply, just remind them that America produced more oil than we have in 15 years. What is true is that we can't just drill our way out of the energy and climate challenge that we face. That's not possible.

I've put forward in the past an all-of-the-above energy strategy, but our energy strategy must be about more than just producing more oil. And by the way, it's certainly got to be about more than just building one pipeline.

Now, I know there's been, for example, a lot of controversy surrounding the proposal to build a pipeline, the Keystone pipeline, that would carry oil from Canadian tar sands down to refineries in the Gulf. And the State Department is going through the final stages of evaluating the proposal. That's how it's always been done. But I do want to be clear: Allowing the Keystone pipeline to be built requires a finding that doing so would be in our Nation's interest. And our national interest will be served only if this project does not significantly exacerbate the problem of carbon pollution. The net effects of the pipeline's impact on our climate will be absolutely critical to determining whether this project is allowed to go forward. It's relevant.

Now, even as we're producing more domestic oil, we're also producing more cleaner-burning natural gas than any other country on Earth. And again, sometimes, there are disputes about natural gas, but let me say this: We should strengthen our position as the top natural gas producer because, in the medium term at least, it not only can provide safe, cheap power, but it can also help reduce our carbon emissions.

Federally supported technology has helped our businesses drill more effectively and extract more gas. And now we'll keep working with the industry to make drilling safer and cleaner, to make sure that we're not seeing methane emissions, and to put people to work modernizing our natural gas infrastructure so that we can power more homes and businesses with cleaner energy.

The bottom line is, natural gas is creating jobs. It's lowering many families' heat and power bills. And it's the transition fuel that can power our economy with less carbon pollution even as our businesses work to develop and then deploy more of the technology required for the even cleaner energy economy of the future.

And that brings me to the second way that we're going to reduce carbon pollution: by using more clean energy. Over the past 4 years, we've doubled the electricity that we generate from zero-carbon wind and solar power. And that means jobs: jobs manufacturing the wind turbines that now generate enough electricity to power nearly 15 million homes; jobs installing the solar panels that now generate more than four times the power at less cost than just a few years ago.

I know some Republicans in Washington dismiss these jobs, but those who do need to call home, because 75 percent of all wind energy in this country is generated in Republican districts. [*Laughter*] And that may explain why last year, Republican Governors in Kansas and Oklahoma and Iowa—Iowa, by the way, a State that harnessed—harnesses almost 25 percent of its electricity from the wind—helped us in the fight to extend tax credits for wind energy manufacturers and producers. Tens of thousands of good jobs were on the line, and those jobs were worth the fight.

And countries like China and Germany are going all in in the race for clean energy. I believe Americans build things better than anybody else. I want America to win that race, but we can't win it if we're not in it.

So the plan I'm announcing today will help us double again our energy from wind and sun. Today I'm directing the Interior Department to green light enough private, renewable energy capacity on public lands to power more than 6 million homes by 2020.

The Department of Defense—the biggest energy consumer in America—will install 3 gigawatts of renewable power on its bases, generating about the same amount of electricity each year as you'd get from burning 3 million tons of coal.

And because billions of your tax dollars continue to—still—subsidize some of the most profitable corporations in the history of the world, my budget once again calls for Congress to end the tax breaks for big oil companies and invest in the clean energy companies that will fuel our future.

Now, the third way to reduce carbon pollution is to waste less energy: in our cars, our homes, our businesses. The fuel standards we set over the past few years mean that by the middle of the next decade, the cars and trucks we buy will go twice as far on a gallon of gas. That means you'll have to fill up half as often; we'll all reduce carbon pollution. And we built on that success by setting the first-ever standards for heavy-duty trucks and buses and vans. And in the coming months, we'll partner with truck makers to do it again for the next generation of vehicles.

Now, meanwhile, the energy we use in our homes and our businesses and our factories, our schools, our hospitals, that's responsible for about one-third of our greenhouse gases. The good news is, simple upgrades don't just cut that pollution, they put people to work manufacturing and installing smarter lights and windows and sensors and appliances. And the savings show up in our electricity bills every month forever. And that's why we've set new energy standards for appliances like refrigerators and dishwashers. And today, our businesses are building better ones that will also cut carbon pollution and cut consumers' electricity bills by hundreds of billions of dollars.

That means, by the way, that our Federal Government also has to lead by example. I'm proud that Federal agencies have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by more than 15 percent since I took office. But we can do even better than that. So today I'm setting a new goal: Your Federal Government will consume 20 percent of its electricity from renewable sources within the next 7 years. We are going to set that goal.

We'll also encourage private capital to get off the sidelines and get into these energy-saving investments. And by the end of the next decade, these combined efficiency standards for appliances and Federal buildings will reduce carbon pollution by at least 3 billion tons. That's an amount equal to what our entire energy sector emits in nearly half a year.

So I know these standards don't sound all that sexy, but think of it this way: That's the equivalent of planting 7.6 billion trees and letting them grow for 10 years, all while doing the dishes. It is a great deal, and we need to be doing it.

So using less dirty energy, transitioning to cleaner sources of energy, wasting less energy through our economy is where we need to go. And this plan will get us there faster. But I want to be honest: This will not get us there overnight. The hard truth is, carbon pollution has built up in our atmosphere for decades now. And even if we Americans do our part, the planet will slowly keep warming for some time to come. The seas will slowly keep rising, and storms will get more severe, based on the science. It's like tapping the brakes of a car before you come to a complete stop and then can shift into reverse. It's going to take time for carbon emissions to stabilize.

So in the meantime, we're going to need to get prepared. And that's why this plan will also protect critical sectors of our economy and prepare the United States for the impacts of climate change that we cannot avoid. States and cities across the country are already taking it upon themselves to get ready. Miami Beach is hardening its water supply against seeping saltwater. We're partnering with the State of Florida to restore Florida's natural clean water delivery system: the Everglades.

The overwhelmingly Republican legislature in Texas voted to spend money on a new water development bank as long—as a long-running drought cost jobs and forced a town to truck in water from the outside.

New York City is fortifying its 520 miles of coastline as an insurance policy against more frequent and costly storms. And what we've learned from Hurricane Sandy and other disasters is that we've got to build smarter, more resilient infrastructure that can protect our homes and businesses and withstand more powerful storms. That means stronger seawalls, natural barriers, hardened power grids, hardened water systems, hardened fuel supplies.

So the budget I sent Congress includes funding to support communities that build these projects, and this plan directs Federal agencies to make sure that any new project funded with taxpayer dollars is built to withstand increased flood risk.

And we'll partner with communities seeking help to prepare for droughts and floods, reduce the risk of wildfires, protect the dunes and wetlands that pull double duty as green space and as natural storm barriers. And we'll also open our climate data and NASA climate imagery to the public to make sure that cities and States assess risk under different climate scenarios so that we don't waste money building structures that don't withstand the next storm.

So that's what my administration will do to support the work already underway across America, not only to cut carbon pollution, but also to protect ourselves from climate change.

But as I think everybody here understands, no nation can solve this challenge alone, not even one as powerful as ours. And that's why the final part of our plan calls on America to lead: lead international efforts to combat a changing climate.

And make no mistake, the world still looks to America to lead. When I spoke to young people in Turkey a few years ago, the first question I got wasn't about the challenges that part of the world faces, it was about the climate challenge that we all face and America's role in addressing it. And it was a fair question because as the world's largest economy and second largest carbon emitter, as a country with unsurpassed ability to drive innovation and scientific breakthroughs, as the country that people around the world continue to look to in times of crisis, we've got a vital role to play. We can't stand on the sidelines. We've got a unique responsibility. And the steps that I've outlined today prove that we're willing to meet that responsibility.

But while America's carbon pollution fell last year, global carbon pollution rose to a record high. That's a problem. Developing countries are using more and more energy, and tens of millions of people entering a global middle class naturally want to buy cars and air conditioners of their own, just like us. Can't blame them for that. And when you have conversations with poorer countries, they'll say: Well, you went through these stages of development. Why can't we?

But what we also have to recognize is these same countries are also more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than we are. They don't just have as much to lose, they probably have more to lose.

Developing nations with some of the fastest rising levels of carbon pollution are going to have to take action to meet this challenge alongside us. They're watching what we do, but we've got to make sure that they're stepping up to the plate as well. We'll—we compete for business with them, but we also share a planet. And we have to all shoulder the responsibility for keeping the planet habitable, or we're going to suffer the consequences, together.

So to help more countries transitioning to cleaner sources of energy and to help them do it faster, we're going to partner with our private sector to apply private sector technological know-how in countries that transition to natural gas. We've mobilized billions of dollars in private capital for clean energy projects around the world.

Today I'm calling for an end of public financing for new coal plants overseas, unless they deploy carbon capture technologies or there's no other viable way for the poorest countries to generate electricity. And I urge other countries to join this effort.

And I'm directing my administration to launch negotiations toward global free trade in environmental goods and services, including clean energy technology, to help more countries skip past the dirty phase of development and join a global low-carbon economy. They don't have to repeat all the same mistakes that we make.

We've also intensified our climate cooperation with major emerging economies like India and Brazil and China, the world's largest emitter. So, for example, earlier this month, President Xi of China and I reached an important agreement to jointly phase down our production and consumption of dangerous hydrofluorocarbons, and we intend to take more steps together in the months to come. It will make a difference. It's a significant step in the reduction of carbon emissions.

And finally, my administration will redouble our efforts to engage our international partners in reaching a new global agreement to reduce carbon pollution through concrete action.

Four years ago, in Copenhagen, every major country agreed, for the first time, to limit carbon pollution by 2020. Two years ago, we decided to forge a new agreement beyond 2020 that would apply to all countries, not just developed countries.

What we need is an agreement that's ambitious, because that's what the scale of the challenge demands. We need an inclusive agreement because every country has to play its part. And we need an agreement that's flexible, because different nations have different needs. And if we can come together and get this right, we can define a sustainable future for your generation.

So that's my plan. The actions I've announced today should send a strong signal to the world that America intends to take bold action to reduce carbon pollution. We will continue to lead by the power of our example, because that's what the United States of America has always done.

I am convinced this is the fight America can and will lead in the 21st century. And I'm convinced this is a fight that America must lead. But it will require all of us to do our part. We'll need scientists to design new fuels, and we'll need farmers to grow new fuels. We'll need engineers to devise new technologies, and we'll need businesses to make and sell those technologies. We'll need workers to operate assembly lines that hum with high-tech, zero-carbon components, but we'll also need builders to hammer into place the foundations for a new clean energy era.

We're going to need to give special care to people and communities that are unsettled by this transition, not just here in the United States, but around the world. And those of us in positions of responsibility, we'll need to be less concerned with the judgment of special interests and well-connected donors and more concerned with the judgment of posterity. Because you and your children and your children's children will have to live with the consequences of our decisions.

As I said before, climate change has become a partisan issue, but it hasn't always been. It wasn't that long ago that Republicans led the way on new and innovative policies to tackle these issues. Richard Nixon opened the EPA. George H.W. Bush declared—first U.S. President to declare—"human activities are changing the atmosphere in unexpected and unprecedented ways." Someone who never shies away from a challenge, John McCain introduced a market-based cap-and-trade bill to slow carbon pollution.

The woman that I've chosen to head up the EPA, Gina McCarthy, she's worked—[*applause*]—she's terrific. Gina has worked for the EPA in my administration, but she's also worked for five Republican Governors. She's got a long track record of working with industry and business leaders to forge commonsense solutions. Unfortunately, she's being held up in the Senate. She's been held up for months, forced to jump through hoops no Cabinet nominee should ever have to, not because she lacks qualifications, but because there are too many in the Republican Party right now who think that the Environmental Protection Agency has no business protecting our environment from carbon pollution. The Senate should confirm her without any further obstruction or delay.

But more broadly, we've got to move beyond partisan politics on this issue. I want to be clear: I am willing to work with anybody—Republicans, Democrats, Independents,

Libertarians, Greens, anybody—to combat this threat on behalf of our kids. I am open to all sorts of new ideas, maybe better ideas, to make sure that we deal with climate change in a way that promotes jobs and growth.

Nobody has a monopoly on what is a very hard problem, but I don't have much patience for anyone who denies that this challenge is real. We don't have time for a meeting of the Flat Earth Society. Sticking your head in the sand might make you feel safer, but it's not going to protect you from the coming storm. And ultimately, we will be judged as a people and as a society and as a country on where we go from here.

Our founders believed that those of us in positions of power are elected not just to serve as custodians of the present, but as caretakers of the future. And they charged us to make decisions with an eye on a longer horizon than the arc of our own political careers. That's what the American people expect. That's what they deserve.

And someday, our children and our children's children will look at us in the eye, and they'll ask us, did we do all that we could when we had the chance to deal with this problem and leave them a cleaner, safer, more stable world? And I want to be able to say, yes, we did. Don't you want that?

Americans are not a people who look backwards, we're a people who look forward. We're not a people who fear what the future holds, we shape it. What we need in this fight are citizens who will stand up and speak up and compel us to do what this moment demands.

Understand, this is not just a job for politicians. So I'm going to need all of you to educate your classmates, your colleagues, your parents, your friends. Tell them what's at stake. Speak up at town halls, church groups, PTA meetings. Push back on misinformation. Speak up for the facts. Broaden the circle of those who are willing to stand up for our future.

Convince those in power to reduce our carbon pollution. Push your own communities to adopt smarter practices. Invest. Divest. Remind folks there's no contradiction between a sound environment and strong economic growth. And remind everyone who represents you at every level of government that sheltering future generations against the ravages of climate change is a prerequisite for your vote. Make yourself heard on this issue.

I understand the politics will be tough. The challenge we must accept will not reward us with a clear moment of victory. There's no gathering army to defeat. There's no peace treaty to sign. When President Kennedy said we'd go to the moon within the decade, we knew we'd build a spaceship and we'd meet the goal. Our progress here will be measured differently: in crises averted, in a planet preserved. But can we imagine a more worthy goal? For while we may not live to see the full realization of our ambition, we will have the satisfaction of knowing that the world we leave to our children will be better off for what we did.

"It makes you realize," that astronaut said all those years ago, "just what you have back there on Earth." And that image in the photograph, that bright blue ball rising over the Moon's surface containing everything we hold dear—the laughter of children, a quiet sunset, all the hopes and dreams of posterity—that's what's at stake. That's what we're fighting for. And if we remember that, I'm absolutely sure we'll succeed.

Now, thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. outside the Old North building. In his remarks, he referred to former President George H.W. Bush; Gov. Samuel D. Brownback of Kansas; Gov.

Mary Fallin of Oklahoma; and Gov. Terry E. Branstad of Iowa; former Govs. William F. Weld, Paul Cellucci, Jane Swift, and W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts; and former Gov. Jodi Rell of Connecticut.

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Names: Anders, William A.; Borman, Frank; Branstad, Terry E.; Brownback, Samuel D.; Bush, George H.W.; Cellucci, Paul; DeGioia, John J.; Fallin, Mary; Lovell, James A., Jr.; McCain, John S., III; McCarthy, Regina; Pelosi, Nancy; Rell, Jodi; Romney, W. Mitt; Swift, Jane; Weld, William F.; Xi Jinping.

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